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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TBILISI 001511

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2013
 TAGS: PGOV, PREL, GG
 SUBJECT: GEORGIA: KMARA ('ENOUGH') MOVEMENT SUMMER
 CAMP ENTICES FEW STUDENTS FROM VACATION

REF: A) TBILISI 1109 B) TBILISI 1458

1. (C) SUMMARY. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF AN OPEN SOCIETY GEORGIA FOUNDATION (OSGF) GRANT, FLEDGLING STUDENT OPPOSITION GROUP "KMARA" (REF B) ORGANIZED AND HOSTED A SUMMER TRAINING CAMP FOR ITS MEMBERS. DIVIDED IN TWO SESSIONS DURING THE WEEK OF JUNE 30, APPROXIMATELY 350 STUDENT LEADERS, ACADEMICS, AND NGO REPRESENTATIVES FROM AROUND GEORGIA GATHERED TO DISCUSS AND PREPARE FOR KMARA'S FUTURE. ORGANIZED BY THE TBILISI-BASED KMARA LEADERSHIP AND THEIR NGO AFFILIATES, THE TRAINING CAMP SOUGHT TO EDUCATE AND EQUIP THE ACTIVISTS, AS WELL AS IDENTIFY THE PRINCIPAL LEADERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION. SUBSEQUENT DEMONSTRATIONS SERVED AS A TESTING GROUND FOR KMARA'S NEW CAPABILITIES, WHICH HAVE PROVEN INEFFECTIVE AND INSIGNIFICANT IN BOLSTERING PUBLIC SUPPORT. POLOFF ATTENDED TWO DAYS OF THE ACTIVIST CAMP AND MET WITH STUDENT LEADER NINI GOGIBERIDZE FOLLOWING THE WEEKEND'S DEMONSTRATIONS. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TRAINING CAMP AND SUBSEQUENT

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Homme, Senior Reviewer

PROTESTS REFUTE KMARA CLAIM TO BE THE VANGUARD OF GRASSROOTS REBELLION IN GEORGIA. END SUMMARY.

TRAINING CAMP

2. (C) THE KMARA TRAINING CAMP WAS HELD IN A SOVIET-ERA AUDITORIUM IN THE ISOLATED MOUNTAIN VILLAGE OF TSKHAVRICHAMIA NEAR TBILISI, CHOSEN FOR ITS CHEAP ACCOMMODATIONS RATHER THAN SECRECY. LODGING, FOOD, AND TRANSPORTATION FOR THE PARTICIPANTS WERE ALL COVERED UNDER THE OSGF GRANT. OSGF IS THE GEORGIAN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOROS FOUNDATION'S OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE, BASED OUT OF NEW YORK. THE ACTIVISTS THEMSELVES FUNDED KMARA'S PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS, SUCH AS T-SHIRTS, HEADBANDS, NOTEPADS, AND LITERATURE. THIS WAS DONE WITH WHAT ORGANIZER NINI GOGIBERIDZE CLAIMS TO BE A BUDGET OF USD 1000, FINANCED BY PARENTS AND FRIENDS IN BOTH GEORGIA AND THE UNITED STATES. TINA KHIDASHELI OF THE GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYER'S ASSOCIATION (GYLA) IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO KMARA.

3. (SBU) THE FIRST SESSION OF KMARA'S SUMMER CAMP INCLUDED "GET TO KNOW YOU" GAMES AND GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS TO THE ORGANIZATION. THERE WERE A FEW GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL PROBLEMS, BUT NO CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIONS WERE PROPOSED. GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDED NDI REGIONAL DIRECTOR MARK MULLEN, UNITED DEMOCRATS (UD) REPRESENTATIVE GOGA GABASHVILI, NEW NATIONAL MOVEMENT (NNM) REPRESENTATIVE GIVI TARGAMADZE, LIBERTY INSTITUTE'S GIGA BOKERIA, AND ACTIVIST TRAINER SLOBODAN MARKOVICH FROM THE SERBIAN OTPOR RESISTANCE MOVEMENT.

4. (SBU) MULLEN ENCOURAGED THE STUDENTS TO SEEK NONVIOLENT METHODS OF PUBLIC PROTEST, OUTLINING SIMILAR PEACEFUL ACTIONS BY STUDENT GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES. THROUGH DISCUSSING EXAMPLES OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND DEMONSTRATION TACTICS, MULLEN PROMOTED A CAUTIOUS AND ORGANIZED APPROACH TO STUDENT ACTIVISM, WHILE UNDERSCORING THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING AS A CIVIC DUTY.

5. (SBU) MULLEN'S EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR NONVIOLENCE RESONATED IN THE REMARKS MADE BY SUBSEQUENT GUEST SPEAKERS. UD REPRESENTATIVE GABASHVILI SPOKE FROM HIS EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT ACTIVIST DURING THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS OF THE EARLY 1990'S. HE PRAISED THE STUDENTS FOR THEIR EFFORTS AND ENCOURAGED THEM TO CONTINUE BELIEVING IN THEIR CAUSE. GABASHVILI STRESSED THAT THE UD VALUES THE ORGANIZATION OF THE YOUTH OPPOSITION AND LOOKS

FORWARD TO ADDRESSING THEIR CONCERNS ON A PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL. GABASHVILI ADDED HIS PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN REGARD TO PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, FOCUSED ON PEACEFUL AND WELL-STRUCTURED MEASURES

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SPEAKERS INCLUDED NDI REGIONAL DIRECTOR MARK MULLEN, UNITED DEMOCRATS (UD) REPRESENTATIVE GOGA GABASHVILI, NEW NATIONAL MOVEMENT (NNM) REPRESENTATIVE GIVI TARGAMADZE, LIBERTY INSTITUTE'S GIGA BOKERIA, AND ACTIVIST TRAINER SLOBODAN MARKOVICH FROM THE SERBIAN OTPOR RESISTANCE MOVEMENT.

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BASHVILI'S LECTURE, AND ADDRESSED SPECIFIC ISSUES REGARDING DEMONSTRATION TACTICS, INCLUDING POLICE INTERVENTION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES. HE ADDED THAT THE STUDENTS, WHETHER PRO-KMARA OR NOT, MUST AGREE UPON A POLITICAL PLATFORM TO ENSURE THAT THEIR GOALS ARE MET. TARGAMADZE DISTINGUISHED KMARA'S ACTIONS FROM THE INDEPENDENCE DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE EARLY 1990'S, WHICH HE INSISTED WERE ESSENTIAL FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE GEORGIAN PEOPLE. NOW IN A MUCH DIFFERENT CONTEXT, TARGAMADZE OPINED THAT THE STUDENTS' VOICES, WHILE DENOUNCING SHEVARNADZE, MUST DEMONSTRATE TO THE GEORGIAN PEOPLE HOW THEIR SURVIVAL IS ONCE AGAIN AT STAKE.

7. (SBU) GIGA BOKERIA OF THE LIBERTY INSTITUTE AUTHORITATIVELY LECTURED THE AUDIENCE WHILE REITERATING THE PREVIOUS SPEAKERS' MESSAGES. BOKERIA REMARKED THAT NONVIOLENT MEASURES MUST BE TAKEN BY KMARA TO ENSURE FRIENDLY PUBLIC AND MEDIA PERCEPTIONS. HE ALSO ENCOURAGED SYSTEMATIC AND CAUTIOUS APPROACHES TO DEMONSTRATIONS, WHILE ASKING THE STUDENTS TO WIN HEARTS AND MINDS BY CONCENTRATING THEIR EFFORTS ON REGIONAL ISSUES. A

FEW OLDER PARTICIPANTS INTERRUPTED AND QUESTIONED KMARA'S LEGITIMACY AND CAPACITY FOR ENSURING A STABLE AND FAIR APPROACH TO THE ELECTIONS. WHEN A FEW EAGER STUDENTS ATTEMPTED A REBUTTAL, BOKERIA'S VOICE FILLED THE ROOM AS HE ADAMANTLY REAFFIRMED HIS BELIEF IN KMARA'S CAPABILITIES TO MOBILIZE THE DISSENTING ELECTORATE.

8. (SBU) STUDENT ACTIVIST SLOBODAN MARKOVICH WAS SPONSORED BY OSGF TO TRAIN THE STUDENTS IN SOCIAL ACTIVISM WITH A FOCUS ON CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. SINCE MARKOVICH'S PARTICIPATION WITH THE SERBIAN OTPOR RESISTANCE MOVEMENT AGAINST THE MILOSEVICH REGIME, HE HAS BEEN INDEPENDENTLY HIRED TO TRAIN AND DEVELOP STUDENT GROUPS AROUND THE WORLD IN DEMONSTRATION TACTICS. OTHER ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE WEEK INCLUDED DEBATE TRAINING, DEMONSTRATION BRAINSTORMING, AND PRACTICE INTERVIEW SESSIONS WITH THE MEDIA.

RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS

9. (SBU) FOLLOWING THE WEEK-LONG TRAINING SESSION OF KMARA'S CORE GROUP OF STUDENTS, MINOR PROTEST ACTIONS WERE STAGED TO TEST THEIR NEW CAPABILITIES WHILE IDENTIFYING THE KMARA FAITHFUL. BELIEVING THAT THEIR PUBLIC IMAGE HAD BEEN TARNISHED BY PREVIOUS ACTIONS (REFTEL B), KMARA SPENT THE REMAINDER OF ITS FUNDS ON SMALL CANDLES, SO AS TO HOLD A VIGIL OUTSIDE OF PARLIAMENT ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 1. IMPEDED BY POOR WEATHER CONDITIONS, THE STUDENTS CONGREGATED ON THE MORNING OF JULY 2 IN FRONT OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH TO DEMAND THE MEDICAL TREATMENT OF 30 SICK CHILDREN, WHOSE CONDITIONS HAD BEEN THREATENED BY A LACK OF FUNDING. APPROXIMATELY 70 ACTIVISTS DISPERSED WITHIN AN HOUR AFTER HEALTH OFFICIALS ASSURED THEM THAT THEY WERE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE FOR THE CHILDREN.

10. (SBU) ABOUT 100 STUDENT PARTICIPANTS IN THE TSKHAVRICHAMIA TRAINING CAMP RETURNED TO TBILISI ON JULY 4 TO LIGHT THEIR CANDLES IN THE SHAPE OF THE WORD "KMARA" IN FRONT OF THE GEORGIAN PARLIAMENT. THE ACTION LASTED FOR 15 MINUTES WITHOUT ANY RESPONSE FROM THE AUTHORITIES AND WITH LITTLE COVERAGE BY THE MEDIA. MEANWHILE, THREE MALE STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE FIRST TRAINING SESSION RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES IN THE CITY OF BORJOMI, IN THE SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION. ARMED WITH KMARA FLIERS DEPICTING THE CARICATURES OF THE "FOR NEW GEORGIA" PRO-GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BLOC LEADERS IN A TOILET BOWL, THE STUDENTS BEGAN DISSEMINATING THE PROPAGANDA AROUND THE CITY.

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THE STUDENTS AND BEGAN TO QUARREL WITH THEM. KMARA CLAIMS THAT THE YOUTH WERE LEFT WITH SMALL SCARS AND BRUISES, AND ONE SUFFERED A BROKEN FINGER.

11. (SBU) UPON HEARING THAT A FEW OF THEIR MEMBERS WERE CONFRONTED AND SUMMARILY ROUGHED UP BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES, KMARA INFORMED THE MEDIA THAT THEY WOULD STAGE A PROTEST IN BORJOMI THE NEXT DAY. SOME 80 KMARA ACTIVISTS PILED INTO A BUS AND ARRIVED IN BORJOMI THE NEXT MORNING. KMARA CLAIMS THAT GAMGEOBA OFFICIALS AND OTHER IDENTIFIED PERSONS DRESSED IN CIVILIAN CLOTHING AWAITED THEIR ARRIVAL AND BLOCKED THE ENTRANCE INTO THE CITY. AS KMARA ATTEMPTED TO BREAK THE BLOCKADE AND DEMAND THEIR ENTRANCE, FIGHTING ERUPTED, REPORTEDLY LEAVING 12 STUDENTS WITH MINOR INJURIES. KMARA ACCUSES THE LOCAL POLICE OF IDLY WATCHING THE CONFRONTATION, AND AT TIMES ENCOURAGING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE VIOLENCE. THE ACTIVISTS EVENTUALLY RETREATED AND RETURNED TO TBILISI WHERE THEY STAGED A DEMONSTRATION ON RUSTAVELI AVENUE. APPROXIMATELY 80 STUDENTS WITH CANDLES MARCHED IN A SINGLE FILE ALONG THE MEDIAN OF THE MAIN AVENUE. ALTHOUGH KMARA TEMPORARILY HALTED CITY TRAFFIC, THEY FAILED TO EVOKE A RESPONSE FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

12. (C) EXHAUSTED AFTER THE LONG WEEK OF TRAINING AND PROTESTING, THE STUDENTS HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR

HOMES AROUND GEORGIA. THE TBILISI-BASED LEADERSHIP CIRCULATED A PRESS RELEASE ON THE BORJOMI INCIDENT, WHICH RECEIVED MINIMAL ATTENTION FROM THE MEDIA. WHILE KMARA INTENDS TO PRESS CHARGES AGAINST THE BORJOMI GAMGEOBA, THEY ARE ALSO LOOKING TO SOLIDIFY WHAT THEY CLAIM TO BE A "MORAL VICTORY" BY RETURNING UNANNOUNCED TO BORJOMI BY THE END OF THE WEEK.

13. (C) COMMENT. KMARA'S RECENT RECEIPT OF OSGF MONEY FOR THE TSKHAVRICHAMIA ACTIVIST CAMP APPEARS TO BE A SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, AND INDICATES INCREASED FINANCIAL TIES BETWEEN THEM AND SOROS (SEPTTEL). HOWEVER, THE LOW PARTICIPATION IN THE SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS OF THE GROUP REFLECT KMARA'S LACK OF ORGANIZATION AND EFFECTIVENESS IN MOBILIZING THE POPULATION. ALTHOUGH THE TBILISI-BASED KMARA LEADERSHIP SEEMED PLEASED WITH THE TRAINING CAMP, THEY REMAIN DISILLUSIONED WITH THE DEARTH OF ATTENTION ATTRACTED BY THE WEEKEND'S PROTESTS. FUTURE DEMONSTRATIONS WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO REFLECT KMARA'S FRAGMENTED AND OPPORTUNISTIC NATURE. END COMMENT.

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